

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 1-15 were allowed, and claims 16-17 were rejected based on cited art and under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting.

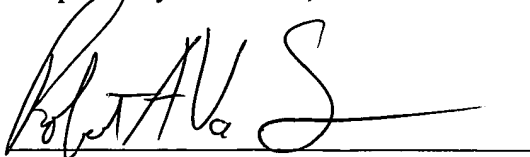
Applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claims 1-15. In this Reply and Amendment, claims 16 and 17 have been canceled without prejudice, and allowed claims 1-15 remain pending in the present application.

Claims 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as anticipated by the Howell et al. reference, US Patent No. 6,602,059. Although Applicants disagree with the rejection, claims 16 and 17 have been canceled without prejudice to obtain allowance of the present application.

Claims 16 and 17 also were rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as unpatentable over claims 1, 2, 8-10, 14-17, 19 and 20 of US Patent No. 6,688,860. This rejection is believed moot in light of the cancellation of claims 16 and 17. Accordingly, all pending claims stand allowed.

In view of the foregoing remarks, the pending application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner wishes to resolve any formal issues by way of a telephone conference, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,



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